

justice not only in the State of Mississippi but across this country. The story of Olen Burrage is one of many in Mississippi's plagued past. The State's insistence on justice signals a new day not only for the State of Mississippi, but also for the families of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner.

BOSTON GLOBE SERIES ON FIRE FIGHTER STAFFING ISSUES

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, today I am inserting in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, excerpts from an excellent series on fire safety by Bill Dedman that ran in the Boston Globe on January 30 and 31, 2005. The series investigates the overwhelming problem of shrinking resources in local fire departments and the resulting threats to public and fire fighter safety. I urge my colleagues to read the entire series on line at: <http://www.boston.com/news/specials/fires/>.

Mr. Dedman conducted what may be the most thorough analysis of the many threats to public safety resulting from understaffed fire houses, tight municipal budgets and ever growing responsibilities. Just this month my staff met with mayors of towns and communities in my congressional district in Massachusetts who are concerned that the fire fighter staffing problems are reaching crisis levels. Since September 2001, Massachusetts has lost 800 paid fire fighters by layoffs and attrition. We have too few fire fighters who are too thinly spread. And the work has essentially doubled.

According to the National Fire Protection Administration, it is critical for fire fighters to arrive at a fire within 6 minutes. But that is not happening. The Globe series revealed that nationwide only 35 percent of fire departments were able to reach 90 percent of building fires in that time. Why? As the chiefs say, "more work, fewer people."

I would like to share the following excerpts from the Globe with my colleagues:

... Lisa Collum was breast-feeding her baby, and her 3-year-old was getting ready for a playdate, when the fire started in the apartment downstairs ... The firehouse a few blocks away was empty. Only three fire-fighters were on duty to cover all 33 square miles of this seaside town, and they were busy with two ambulance calls on this January evening in 2001. One firefighter drove back for the fire engine, then hurried into the chaos at the Collums' home ... It was standing room only at the funeral ...

... Once a day on average in this country, someone dies when firefighters arrive too late, an investigation of fire response times by the Globe has found. America's fire departments are giving fires a longer head-start, arriving later each year, especially in the suburbs around Boston, Atlanta and other cities, where growth is brisk but fire staffing has been cut ...

... In Massachusetts, people waited 10 minutes or more for firefighters to arrive at 214 building fires in 2002, the last year for which data is available. Since 1990, there have been 2,786 such fires, including blazes at jails, mental hospitals, apartment buildings, shopping malls and private homes.

... The fire department budgets are not growing to keep up, but shrinking. As a

share of all municipal budgets across the country, fire spending has slipped, from 6.1 percent in fiscal 1987 to 5.7 percent in fiscal 2003, the Globe calculated from the US Census Bureau's survey of governments ...

Small-town departments are increasingly undertaking aggressive interior assaults on fires. Some of these smaller fire departments do not have the training, equipment, and backup personnel to safely accomplish these dangerous tactics," warned a 1998 report by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health ... After the Worcester fire that killed six firefighters in 1999, federal investigators warned of the need to have a rested crew standing by with safety equipment. But fire chiefs in the Boston suburbs say such a team is usually assembled only after the fire is nearly out.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to visit the web and read this series more closely. We owe it to the public and to our brave fire fighters whose lives are on the line every day.

EXPRESSING THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN IRAQ AND COMMEMORATING SGT SHERWOOD BAKER

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives an op-ed piece written by the brother of one of my constituents who was killed in Iraq. SGT Sherwood Baker of Plymouth, Pennsylvania, served as a member of the Second Battalion, 103rd Armor of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

Sergeant Baker was only 30 years old when he died in a warehouse explosion in Baghdad on April 26, 2004, where he was searching for weapons of mass destruction. Sergeant Baker made the ultimate sacrifice while serving his country, searching for weapons our government now concedes cannot be found and most likely did not exist.

Dante Zappala writes with the pain of one who has lost a loved one; more than 1,400 other families are grieving for the loss of their loved ones who died in the service of our country. Dante's heartfelt plea for accountability should resonate among all Americans, especially those of us in Congress who authorized President Bush to lead our Nation into war.

The Bush Administration convinced me that Iraq posed an "imminent threat" to the national security of the United States. I now believe that it was never a threat. Until I have a full understanding of what caused us to be so wrong, I doubt that this Administration can convince me again that they are right in their decisions based on their analysis of intelligence.

Dante is right: We are all accountable. Now that the contentious election of 2004 is behind us and President Bush has been inaugurated to a second term, I hope that we can acknowledge the mistakes we made that led us to war, learn from those mistakes, and avoid making them in the future. Our Nation's security depends on it.

Mr. Speaker, Congress must play a stronger role in holding this Administration accountable

for the innocent lives that have been sacrificed.

I submit the following for entry into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

WHY MY BROTHER DIED

(By Dante Zappala)

This week, the White House announced, with little fanfare, that the two-year search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq had finally ended, and it acknowledged that no such weapons existed there at the time of the U.S. invasion in 2003.

For many, this may be a story of only passing interest. But for me and my family, it resonates with profound depth.

My brother was Sgt. Sherwood Baker. He was a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard deployed a year ago with his unit out of Wilkes-Barre. He said goodbye to his wife and his 9-year-old son, boarded a bus and went to Ft. Dix, N.J., to be hastily retrained. His seven years of Guard training as a forward observer was practically worthless because he would not face combat. All he needed to do was learn how to not die.

He received a crash course in convoy security, including practice in running over cardboard cutouts of children. We bought him a GPS unit and walkie-talkies because he wasn't supplied with them. In Iraq, Sherwood was assigned to the Iraq Survey Group and joined the search for weapons of mass destruction.

David Kay, who led the group until January 2004, had already stated that they did not exist. Former United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix had expressed serious doubts about their presence during prewar inspections. In fact, a cadre of former U.N. inspectors and U.S. generals had been saying for years that Iraq posed no threat to our country. On April 26, 2004, the Iraq Survey Group, at the behest of the stubborn administration sitting safely in office buildings in Washington, was still on its fruitless but dangerous search. My brother stood atop his Humvee, securing the perimeter in front of a suspect building in Baghdad. But as soldiers entered the building, it exploded; the official cause is still not known. Sherwood was struck by debris in the back of his head and neck, and he was killed.

Since that day, my family and I have lived with the grief of losing a loved one. We have struggled to explain his death to his son. We have gazed at the shards of life scattered at our feet, in wonder of its fragility, in perpetual catharsis with God.

I have moved from frustration to disappointment to anger. And now I have arrived at a place not of understanding but of hope—blind hope that this will change.

The Iraq Survey Group's final report, which was filed in October but revealed only on Wednesday, confirmed what we knew all along. And as my mother cried in the kitchen, the nation barely blinked.

I am left now with a single word seared into my consciousness: accountability. The chance to hold our administration's feet to that flame has passed. But what of our citizenry? We are the ones who truly failed. We shut down our ability to think critically, to listen, to converse and to act. We are to blame.

Even with every prewar assumption having been proved false, today more than 130,000 U.S. soldiers are trying to stay alive in a foreign desert with no clear mission at hand.

At home, the sidelines are overcrowded with patriots. These Americans cower from the fight they instigated in Iraq. In a time of war and record budget deficits, many are loath to even pay their taxes. In the end, however, it is not their family members who are at risk, and they do not sit up at night pleading with fate to spare them.